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STATE OF MICHIGAN
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES
LANSING



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DIRECTOR

December 3, 2014

The Honorable Kenneth Kurtz, Chairman
House Families, Children and Seniors Committee
Michigan House of Representatives
Lansing, Michigan 48909

Dear Representative Kurtz:

Thank you so much for the partnership that we have shared and for your commitment to Michigan's families, children and seniors. The dedication and hard work of this committee and your leadership as the Chair have led to significant reforms and accomplishments. Without your efforts, the legislative accomplishments I am most proud of during my tenure as Director of the Department of Human Services would not have been possible. Let me highlight just a few of these legislative initiatives:

- ***Young Adult Voluntary Foster Care***, PA 225-230 of 2011 extended foster care and guardianship assistance to youth up to the age of 21. This provides necessary support to foster youth aging out of the system.
- ***Permanency and Adoption Improvements***
 - a. PA 30-32 of 2011 allows the MCI Superintendent and the department to authorize a designee to consent to the adoption or appointment of a guardian for a child. In situations where the adoption is uncontested, this has achieved permanency sooner and avoided unnecessary bureaucratic delay.
 - b. PA 614 of 2012 permits a married individual to adopt a child without his or her spouse joining in the petition, if failure to join the petition is excused by the court for good cause. This offers permanency in some situations where a spouse cannot have their spouse join the petition and give consent due to disability or estrangement.
- ***Michigan Indian Family Preservation Act, PA 565 of 2012*** codifies the federal Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) and demonstrates Michigan's commitment to following ICWA and preserving tribal law and heritage.
- ***Increased communication and collaboration among the 3 branches of State government***
 - a. PA 67-70 and 89 of 2011 increased collaboration and communication regarding child fatality review across the 3 branches of government to create consistent data reporting and achieve systemic review to prevent future fatalities.

- b. PA 243 of 2014 provided the Office of Children's Ombudsman (OCO) with the ability to request documents and records in the same manner provided to the DHS. These amendments removed an unnecessary layer of bureaucracy in the child fatality review process.
 - c. PA 163 of 2012 clarifies the emergency removal procedures for children needing to be placed into foster care for the courts, DHS and law enforcement.
 - d. PA 30 of 2014 provides significant reform in policy and procedure for the central registry for child abuse and neglect perpetrators including removing the requirement that all perpetrators must remain on the registry for life. In less egregious cases, the perpetrator will be able to come off the registry after a period of ten years.
- ***Paternity Establishment for Putative Fathers***, PA 159-162 of 2012, addresses a longstanding and sometimes tragic gap in Michigan law that prevented some biological fathers from establishing legal paternity of their children. Most importantly, courts are required in all cases to make decisions based on the best interests of the child.
- ***Public Assistance Reform***, PA 131-132 of 2011 and PA 607 of 2012 established a 48-month time limit for the Family Independence Program (FIP) for all able bodied adults and no longer allowed individuals who are otherwise able to work from receiving assistance beyond 60 months. DHS has focused on assisting families receiving assistance in meeting federal work requirements through PATH and Pathways to Potential and has thereby increased the amount of families who are engaged in work activities and reduced the FIP caseload.
- ***Fraud, Waste and Abuse Prevention Efforts***
 - a. PA 77-79 of 2012 and 197 of 2012 codified an asset test for the Food Assistance Program (FAP); required lottery and gambling winnings to be included when determining financial eligibility for FIP and FAP; and required Lottery to notify DHS when a DHS client has won a prize of \$1000 or more.
 - b. PA 178 of 2013 and 55-56 of 2012 clarifies that Michigan food, liquor and lotto licenses for food establishments and retailers will be in jeopardy if federal requirements for the FAP are not met.
- ***Vulnerable Adult Package***, PA 175 of 2012 (among many other bills) amends the Social Welfare Act to require an in-person interview with an adult suspected of abuse, neglect or exploitation for the protection of Michigan's vulnerable adults. Also, this Act lead to the creation of a model protocol for the investigation of vulnerable adult abuse, neglect and exploitation.

Thank you for your partnership in achieving significant reform and legislative accomplishments designed to assist Michigan's most vulnerable citizens. Your support of DHS and the clients we serve is valued and appreciated.

Sincerely,

Maura D. Corrigan

c: Members of the House Families, Children and Seniors Committee